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SUBJECT: SWEDISH MINDEF ON AFGHANISTAN AND SWEDISH DEFENSE REFORM

11. Summary. On May 29, Swedish Defense Minister Sten Tolgfors told CODEL Tanner: 1) Sweden is focusing on development and army training in Afghanistan, but has concerns about the capabilities of the Afghan National Police; 2) Swedish defense reforms signal the capacity for more international cooperation and a more professional armed forces; and 3) Sweden's EU Presidency will press for better readiness and force generation capabilities for the EU Common Mission. End Summary.

12. A delegation of U.S. Congressional Representatives, led by Representative John Tanner (D-TN), and accompanied by the Charge, visited Swedish Defense Minister Sten Tolgfors on May 29. The members included Representatives John Boozman (R-AR), Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO), Jeff Miller (R-FL), Dennis Moore (D-KS), Mike Ross (D-AR), Mike Turner (R-OH), Ben Chandler (D-KY) and NATO Parliamentary Secretary General David Hobbs (UK). Tolgfors was accompanied by Chief of Staff Jakob Keifer, Director General for Political Affairs Johan Raeder, and MoD US Desk Officer Staffan Jonsatter.

Swedish Move from Neutrality to Military Non-Alignment

13. In his opening statement, Tolgfors reviewed the Swedish transition from neutrality, to military non-alignment in peace with the intent to stay neutral in time of war, to the current posture of military non-alignment with the option of giving or receiving military aid if another EU Member State were attacked. He expressed dissatisfaction with Sweden's historical practice of "defining itself by what we are not" and seeks to define Sweden by "what we are." Tolgfors framed this statement as a maturing of the current security policy formulation towards Swedish armed forces that are readily available to be used at home and abroad, and to both contribute and receive forces in the event of a regional crisis.

Afghanistan: National Police Needs Attention

14. Tolgfors indicated his enthusiasm for Sweden's presence in Afghanistan, noting the impending increase from 410 to 500 troops and emphasis on a broader geographic presence in the northern provinces under the control of the Swedish-led PRT in Mazar-e Sharif. Tolgfors expressed the clear political will to contribute medevac helicopters to Afghanistan, but said they are not yet technically ready. Once Swedish helicopters have completed procurement and are properly adapted for use in the Afghanistan environment, they will provide an even more important means of covering larger swaths of territory. Sweden is also now preparing to send troops to train one Afghan Army battalion. For the longer term, Tolgfors asked rhetorically who will take the lead when the presence in Mazar-e Sharif grows beyond a PRT.

15. Sweden is also working in development and diplomacy, increasing foreign aid to Afghanistan by 60 percent to 60 million USD. Sweden has opened an embassy in Kabul and is increasingly focused on police and rule of law training, such as with prosecutors. Sweden is also putting pressure on the Afghanistan government to protect human

rights, especially with respect to capital punishment, treatment of prisoners, and corruption, in response to domestic Swedish concerns.

¶16. For the short term, Tolgfors noted that the upcoming elections are one important challenge and credible progress in governmental basics like building roads is mandatory. A second immediate challenge will be deterring insurgent attacks on new ISAF supply lines through Mazar-e Sharif (under the Swedish PRT) which will impact the provincial security situation. An increase in IED attacks has already begun, with the death of a Norwegian soldier last month.

¶17. In response to a question from Rep. Turner regarding intervention against opium growers, Tolgfors noted that the PRT sector controlled by Sweden is not a producer, but a distribution channel. He described Swedish and general European sensitivities to using military forces for a police action. Turner pressed the issue further, noting that drugs are part of the overall structure for the insurgency. Without a strategic effort to cut out that funding, there will continue to be extremist activity.

¶18. Tolgfors mentioned that increased training for the Afghan National Police (ANP) was hampered by a lack of European police advisers. He highlighted the domestic political difficulties for European countries that already lack sufficient domestic police forces to ship out experienced officers to Afghanistan. Tolgfors described this not as a lack of available trained people, but rather the poor political optic of sending police overseas, when there is still crime at home. He also hypothesized that experienced police officers with an interest in serving in Afghanistan were more likely to simply sign up for military service. Raeder mentioned that he had seen reports of up to 30 percent of the ANP being addicted to drugs.

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Swedish Army Reforms Illustrate Changing Policy -----

¶19. Tolgfors highlighted the governing coalitions push to reform the Swedish military to an all-volunteer force, which goes into effect next year. Traditionally, Swedish conscript forces required one year of training and two years of service for missions restricted to domestic service. In contrast, studies show that all volunteer forces can be better trained, have longer careers, and be deployed as part of international missions. The change to an all-volunteer military shows Sweden's move from a reactive defense policy to one in which Sweden "builds security with others," according to Tolgfors. However, he predicted that there will need to be a national decision on the issue soon. In response to a query from Rep. Emerson about the impact of global economic turbulence on defense allocations, Tolgfors noted no detrimental effect.

Climate Change is a Security Issue -----

¶10. In response to a question from Rep. Boozman, Tolgfors highlighted the importance of climate change on emerging conflicts. He mentioned specifically fighting over water rights and territorial tensions exacerbated by migration patterns.

Sea Issues -----

¶11. Tolgfors mentioned two close regional issues. First, that increased sea traffic in the Baltic, particularly related to energy transport, might cause conflicts or generally raise tensions. Second, Tolgfors suggested that the United States should pay particular attention to the Barents Sea. Tolgfors also mentioned that the EU needs to work more closely on sea-related defense issues, primarily in maritime domain awareness and exchange of recognized sea picture information.

Russia: Some Real Strengths, but More Shows of Strength -----

¶12. Described as an enigma by Rep. Chandler, Russia was the focus of an extended colloquy by Tolgfors. He posited that Russia's wish is to create the perception of strength by, first, outspoken foreign policy positions, and, second, through military exercises. The reaction from Western governments can often encourage Russia to continue the pattern of belligerence. He noted that while some parts of the Russian military, particularly the rapid response forces used in Georgia, are highly effective, the general military force is underfunded and weak. Likewise, Russian's energy sector pulls along the entire Russian economy, but most other sectors are struggling. Russia is also facing a significant decline in population and low vitality (noting the average life span for a Russian male is 58 years). Responding to a query from Rep. Chandler about whether a long-standing friendship was possible with Russia, Tolgfors asked rhetorically whether an alternative existed.

North Korea: Best Response is to Stay Cool and be Firm

¶13. Tolgfors noted the presence of a small number of Swedish troops in Panmunjom working on the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in conjunction with Swiss troops. These troops serve in a symbolic capacity to supervise the Armistice Treaty between North and South Korean. Raeder indicated that North Korea has indicated repeatedly that it no longer feels bound by the Armistice which leaves the Swedish and Swiss troops in a theoretically vulnerable position. However, the Swedes see no imminent danger to their troops. Raeder suggested that North Korea's show of strength might be accompanied by some form of internal transition that requires assertive behavior by emerging leadership.

NATO: Ask Us After the Election

¶14. Tolgfors noted that the government coalition promised not to take up NATO membership during the present term. There are members in the ruling coalition who remain opposed to NATO membership, and for the opposition NATO membership is a "red line" issue. However, NATO membership is completely distinguishable from the Afghanistan mission for most of the opposition and is a separate political issue. Tolgfors used this as one of several examples where focusing on specific activities under a NATO umbrella is relatively easy to gain consensus for, whereas a general membership agenda is harder.

EU Defense Goals for Sweden's Presidency

¶15. In closing the meeting, Tolgfors emphasized three Swedish defense-related goals for the EU presidency. First, he advocated

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the increased usability of Swedish forces, especially since Sweden is scheduled to lead EU Battle Groups in 2011 and 2014. He hoped to apply pressure for a 10-day readiness standard for EU Common Mission needs. Second, he was generally concerned about the EU's force generation capability. Third, he focused on coordinating defense materials planning among the 27 EU nations. Noting that each EU presidency term has involved an unexpected crisis, Tolgfors noted the importance of Sweden being prepared to exercise crisis leadership.

SILVERMAN